

The British Army Reserve on 1 October 1913

Branch	Reserve→	Section “A”	Sections “B” & “C”	Section “D”	TOTAL
Cavalry		-	6,967	3,708	10,675
Royal Horse Artillery & Royal Field Artillery		670	13,694	4,645	19,009
Royal Garrison Artillery		-	6,023	259	6,282
Royal Engineers		426	4,079	959	5,464
Infantry		4,234	62,510	23,382	90,126
Various Corps		493	10,823	2,218	13,534
TOTAL:		5,823	104,096	35,171	145,090

Source: *The Times History of the War – The Battlefields of Europe* (New York: Woodward & Van Slyke, 1914), page 138.

The Army Reserve was a pool of men who had already completed a term of service with the regular army. Their role was to fill out Expeditionary Force regular units based at home to full strength in the event of war. It was organized into three Sections:

Section A Reserve

For men who had completed their service in the regular army and who undertook to rejoin, if required, in an emergency that did not require general mobilization (“short notice men”). A man could serve no more than two years in Section A. Pay was 7 shillings a week in addition to the reservist’s earnings as a civilian. He had to attend twelve training days per year.

Sections B & C Reserve

This was the most common form of army reserve service. For men who had completed their service in the regular army (3 or 7 years) and were discharged and serving the remainder of their 12 year total obligation in the reserve. Section B & C reservists could only be called upon in the event of general mobilization. Pay was 3 shillings and 6 pence a week.

Section D Reserve

For men who had completed their 12 year obligation in the regular army or reserve. They could choose to extend for another four years and were placed in Section D Reserve. Terms, pay and training were the same as Sections B & C.

The Army Reservists were mobilised in early August 1914. Many went to fill up the ranks of the regular army units to their war establishment. All those surplus to the immediate needs of the regular army battalions were posted to the Special Reserve (see below). Thus the (usually) 3rd Battalion of each regiment was massively and very rapidly expanded. Very large numbers of men passed through the S.R. battalions before being posted to the regular units.

The Special Reserve was a form of part-time soldiering that replaced the former Militia, and was considered a feeder for the regular army. Men would enlist into the Special Reserve for 6

years and had to accept the possibility of being called up in the event of a general mobilization, foreign service, and otherwise undertake all the same conditions as men of the Army Reserve. Their period as a Special Reservist started with six months full-time training (paid the same as a regular) and they had 3-4 weeks training per year thereafter. A man who had not served as a regular could extend his SR service by up to four years but could not serve beyond the age of 40. A former regular soldier who had completed his Army Reserve term could also re-enlist as a Special Reservist and serve up to the age of 42.

All regiments had a unit (or more) dedicated to the administration and training of the Special Reservists. In most infantry regiments this was designated the 3rd (Reserve) Battalion. In all there were 101 Special Reserve battalions in existence in August 1914. Their job was to remain in the UK and provide reinforcement drafts for the active service battalions.

Staffed by regular soldiers, each S.R. Battalion had a complement of 8 officers, 1 RSM, 38 NCOs, 10 Drummers and 40 Privates of the regular army, and the official establishment when all reservists were on duty was a little over 600 (i.e. smaller than a full-scale serving battalion).

In Ireland, where the Territorial Force was not created, the SR was the only form of part-time soldiering. The North Irish Horse and South Irish Horse were regiments entirely composed of Special Reservists. The Irish infantry regiments and a number of UK regiments had additional special reservists who were formed into "Extra Reserve" battalions in 1908. In 1914 most of these took up home defense duties and subsequently were drafted for personnel to replace casualties in units on active service.

The S.R. men were mobilised in early August 1914. Between them and the Army Reservists they represented a large proportion of the original Divisions of the BEF that went to France that month.